

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 229192 TOSEC 270198

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TAGS:SOPN, US, PINT

SUBJECT: VERBATIM TEXT: PRINCIPAL FINDINGS FROM PORTLAND
"TOWN MEETING" ON FOREIGN POLICY

1. MEMORANDUM TO SECRETARY, DATED APRIL 30, 1976, FROM
AF-WILLIAM E. SCHAUFELER, JR., IO-SAMUEL W. LEWIS, EUR-JOHN
A. ARMITAGE, ARA-WILLIAM H. LUERS ,

2. BEGIN TEXT: ON APRIL 8 WE PARTICIPATED IN THE SECOND
OF FIVE "TOWN MEETINGS" -- THIS ONE IN PORTLAND, OREGON --
AT WHICH THE DEPARTMENT IS LISTENING TO THE PUBLIC'S VIEWS
ON FOUR FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY: (1) U.S.
-SOVIET RELATIONS; (2) U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES; (3) THE VALUES THAT SHOULD GOVERN OUR FOREIGN
POLICY; (4) THE OBJECTIVES TOWARD WHICH OUR FOREIGN POLICY
SHOULD BE DIRECTED.

3. THE PORTLAND MEETING WAS THE FIRST OF TWO ON THE WEST
COAST IN WHICH WE PARTICIPATED; THE SECOND WAS HELD TWO
DAYS LATER IN SAN FRANCISCO AND IS THE SUBJECT OF A SECOND
REPORT. AS YOU WILL RECALL, THIS PROGRAM BEGAN IN PITTS-
BURGH, IN MID-FEBRUARY. ADDITIONAL MEETINGS WILL BE HELD
IN MILWAUKEE AND MINNEAPOLIS.
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4. AS IN PITTSBURGH, THE LOCAL WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL ALSO
SPONSORED A PUBLIC-OPINION SURVEY OF 300 AREA RESIDENTS
IN ADDITION TO THE DAY-LONG MEETING. THE PRINCIPAL POLL
FINDINGS, ALONG WITH A REVIEW OF MAJOR POINTS RAISED AT

THE MEETING'S FOUR WORKSHOP SESSIONS, ARE SUMMARIZED IN THIS MEMORANDUM.

5. BASIC IMPRESSIONS. AFTER THE PITTSBURGH MEETING, THE DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES REPORTED A "FAIRLY SERIOUS COMMUNICATION PROBLEM"; THE SAME PROBLEM SURFACED IN PORTLAND. WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THE COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM IS, AT ITS HEART, A DEEP SENSE -- IN PORTLAND, AND PERHAPS ELSEWHERE -- THAT "WE" IN WASHINGTON SIMPLY HAVE NOT APPEARED TO BE ANIMATED IN THE LAST DECADE OR SO BY THE SAME ROOT SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG AS "THEY" ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY. WE WERE DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THE SENSE OF ESTRANGEMENT BETWEEN PORTLAND AND THE NATION'S CAPITAL.

6. YET, ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS SAW US AS NOT APPLYING THEIR FUNDAMENTAL VALUES TO THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY, OUR PRESENCE WAS NOTED WITH PLEASED SURPRISE AND THE DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONING WERE CONDUCTED ALMOST INVARIABLY WITH CIVILITY.

7. ALTHOUGH THIS ESTRANGEMENT IS NOT READILY DOCUMENTED, WE BELIEVE IT EVINCES ITSELF IN SERIOUS PUBLIC DOUBTS ABOUT WASHINGTON MOTIVES AND INCOMPREHENSION OF WASHINGTON -- INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT'S -- OBJECTIVES. THUS, IN THE PREMEETING POLL OF THE GENERAL PORTLAND PUBLIC, 59 PERCENT OF THOSE QUESTIONED AGREED THAT 'AMERICAN LEADERS DON'T CARE HOW MUCH THEIR FOREIGN POLICIES COST THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.' ONLY ONE-THIRD OF THOSE QUESTIONED DISAGREED WITH THIS PROPOSITION. WHILE THIS VIEW DOES NOT DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE DEPARTMENT ITSELF, IT ILLUSTRATES THE GENERALIZED DISENCHANTMENT WITH GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS FROM WHICH THE DEPARTMENT ALSO SUFFERS.

8. QUESTIONING OF THE MOTIVES BEHIND DEPARTMENT DECISIONS, OFTEN VOICED WITH MORE SADNESS THAN INDIGNATION, PERVADED MUCH OF THE DISCUSSION. IT OFTEN ACCOMPANIED THE MORE SPECIFIC COMMENTS OFFERED BY MANY OF THE 400 OR SO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING, FORMALLY TITLED THE NORTHWEST FOREIGN POLICY FORUM. THOSE ATTENDING WERE FROM PORTLAND AND MANY PARTS OF OREGON AND WASHINGTON.

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9. WE WERE DEEPLY STRUCK BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH MORAL INDIGNATION WAS DIRECTED AT MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

THEY WERE CONDEMNED FREQUENTLY AND ANGRILY, AND HARDLY A PARTICIPANT ROSE TO THEIR DEFENSE. THE FEW BUSINESSMEN PRESENT AS PARTICIPANTS APPARENTLY PREFERRED NOT TO SPEAK UP AT THIS POINT.

10. THERE WERE FEW SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF FOREIGN POLICY ON WHICH THE PARTICIPANTS COULD TAKE A UNITED STAND, APART FROM A PERVASIVE CONCERN WITH MAINTAINING PEACE, PREVENTING NUCLEAR WAR, AND PROMOTING THE REGIONAL ECONOMY. WHEN PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT TO ARTICULATE THE SPECIFICS OF A POLICY, THEY OFTEN FOUND THEMSELVES CAUGHT ON THE HORNS OF THE SAME DILEMMAS WITH WHICH WE ARE FAMILIAR. IT WAS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO SHARE THIS DISTRESS. DISCERNING THE DIFFICULTY OF DECISION-MAKING HAS VALUE AS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION. FOR OUR PART, IT HELPED US PERCEIVE THAT THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE DIRECTIONS TAKEN BY OUR FOREIGN POLICY WANT TO KNOW THAT MORAL AS WELL AS PRAGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

11. U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. THE DISCUSSION IN THIS SESSION REVEALED THAT MOST OF THOSE PRESENT DID NOT VIEW POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION IN MONOLITHIC TERMS. THE FACT THAT PORTLAND IS A PORT CITY, FROM WHICH GREAT QUANTITIES OF GRAIN AND LUMBER ARE SHIPPED TO THE FAR EAST, EXPLICITLY SHAPED THE VIEWS ON FOREIGN TRADE OF A GOOD MANY WHO ATTENDED THIS SESSION. AS ONE PARTICIPANT NOTED, GIVEN THE PRICE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN SHIPPING BY SEA VS. OVERLAND, "PORTLAND IS CLOSER TO JAPAN THAN TO CHICAGO."

12. THUS, OUR POLICY ON TRADE WITH THE SOVIET UNION WAS DISTINGUISHED WITH ESPECIAL CARE FROM OTHER ASPECTS OF UNCLASSIFIED

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OUR SOVIET POLICY. THE PREVAILING, THOUGH NOT UNANIMOUS, FEELING WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT EVEN THREATEN TO BLOCK SALES OF GRAIN AS A FORM OF BARGAINING LEVERAGE. SIMILARLY, TRADE SHOULD NOT BE LINKED TO SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICY. THIS SAME ATTITUDE WAS REFLECTED IN THE POLL DATA, WHERE THE PRAGMATIC PORTLANDERS FAVORED TRADE WITHOUT CONDITIONS EVEN THOUGH THEY DISTRUST THE RUSSIANS. THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SOVIET UNION WAS PRETTY MUCH PASSED OVER IN THIS SESSION BUT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR EXPANDED EXCHANGES.

13. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WAS CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS, WHICH EMERGED IN ASSERTIONS THAT WE MUST NOT FALL BEHIND THE SOVIET UNION IN MILITARY STRENGTH -- ALTHOUGH LITTLE CONCERN WAS EXPRESSED THAT WE ACTUALLY WERE FALLING BEHIND. THERE WAS GENERAL SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO REDUCE TENSIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE U.S.S.R., FOR AGREEMENTS THAT DIMINISH THE DANGER OF NUCLEAR WAR, AND ESPECIALLY FOR FURTHER ARMS LIMITATION.

14. THE WARY WILLINGNESS TO DEAL WITH THE SOVIET UNION THAT SEEMED THE PREDOMINANT ATTITUDE WAS EXPRESSED IN THE

CAUTIOUS ASSESSMENT OF DETENTE. IT WAS SEEN AS HAVING BEEN OVERSOLD TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND THERE WAS A DESIRE FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION. WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE MORE REALISTIC IN OUR EXPECTATIONS. ALSO, THERE WAS A SUSPICION IT MAY, OVERALL, HAVE BENEFITTED THE SOVIET UNION MORE THAN THE UNITED STATES. IN THE POLL, 36 PERCENT SAID RUSSIA HAD BENEFITTED MORE FROM DETENTE; 44 PERCENT THOUGHT THE BENEFITS HAD BEEN EQUAL; ONLY ONE PERCENT SAID THE U.S. HAD THE GREATER BENEFIT.

15. INTERESTINGLY, A NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WITH EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL GRAIN TRADING POINTED OUT THAT THE SOVIET UNION TENDS TO BE MORE METICULOUS IN OBSERVING THE LETTER OF COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS THAN AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN. OCCASIONALLY, THIS RESULTS IN THE DISCOMFITURE OF AMERICANS CALLED TO ACCOUNT FOR OVERLOOKING A FINE POINT OF THEIR AGREEMENTS.

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16. THE U.S. AND THE UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES. JUST AS THE PREDOMINANT ATTITUDES IN THE SESSION OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS WERE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY PARTICIPANTS ACUTELY AWARE OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTERESTS, SO WAS THE SENSE OF THIS SESSION COLORED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF A GOOD MANY PARTICIPANTS WHO EITHER WERE BORN IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES OR HAD SERVED IN OVERSEAS PROGRAMS. OF ALL THE SESSIONS, PERHAPS THIS ONE WAS MOST INVOLVED WITH ARTICULATING DILEMMAS RATHER THAN RAISING OBJECTIONS OR PROPOSING SOLUTIONS.

17. ONE POINT ON WHICH THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT WAS THAT THE ARMS RACE IN WHICH MANY UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES WERE ENGAGED WASTED THEIR SCARCE FINANCIAL RESOURCES, FURTHER, THIS WASTE WAS WORSENING, SINCE MANY OF THESE COUNTRIES WERE PROCURING INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED, HENCE EXPENSIVE, WEAPONRY.

18. ANOTHER ASSERTION THAT ELICITED A GOOD DEAL OF AGREEMENT WAS THE DESIGNATION OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS AS MAJOR MALEFACTORS IN EXPLOITING UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOMEONE DID POINT OUT THAT SUCH FIRMS HAD A GREAT DEAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SO LONG AS THEY COULD BE PREVENTED FROM ABUSING THEIR POWER.

19. FOR THE MOST PART, THIS SESSION WAS DEVOTED TO SETTING FORTH DIVERSE FACETS OF A ROSTER OF PROBLEMS: HOW SHOULD THE UNITED STATES DEAL WITH NEEDY PEOPLES RULED BY REGIMES THAT GOVERNED DICTATORIALLY? HOW SHOULD LIMITED RESOURCES BE ALLOCATED, GIVEN THAT SOME COUNTRIES SHOWED MUCH GREATER PROMISE OF BECOMING SELF-SUSTAINING THRO-

UGH SUCH AID THAN OTHERS? HOW SHOULD THE U.S. RECONCILE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THIS GOVERNMENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRIMARY NEEDS OF UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND THE OFTEN DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS?

20. EVEN PARTICIPANTS DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH SUCH PROBLEMS HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY IN RESOLVING THE CONTRADICTION INTERESTS AND DEMANDS THAT ARISE IN DEALING WITH THEM. IT WOULD SEEM, THEREFORE, THAT THE BASIS FOR CONSENSUS ON UNCLASSIFIED

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SUCH ISSUES MUST ARISE FROM SHARED MORAL CONCERNS RATHER THAN AGREEMENT ON THE SPECIFICS OF EACH CASE. GIVEN THE DIFFICULTY ENCOUNTERED BY SESSION PARTICIPANTS IN FORMULATING POLICY TOWARD THE UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES, IT MAY BE ESPECIALLY INTERESTING TO REVIEW HOW THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN PORTLAND RESPONDED TO POLL QUESTIONS TOUCHING ON GENERAL ASPECTS OF DEALING WITH UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES:

21. ASKED TO RESPOND TO THE STATEMENT, "THE U.S. SHOULD GIVE AID ONLY TO THOSE COUNTRIES THAT WILL HELP US DO WHAT WE WANT," 54 PERCENT DISAGREED. LIKEWISE, 62 PERCENT REPLIED NEGATIVELY TO THE STATEMENT, "THE U.S. SHOULD GIVE AID ONLY TO THOSE COUNTRIES THAT HAVE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS."

22. THE BEDROCK PROBLEM OF "STOPPING WORLD HUNGER" WAS DEEMED "VERY IMPORTANT" BY 65 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS AND "SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT" BY ANOTHER 22 PERCENT. BUT THE PREFERRED MEANS AND EXTENT OF AID TO UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES SHOWED FAR LESS CONSENSUS. VOLUNTEERED RESPONSES RANGED ACROSS A WIDE SPECTRUM OF PROGRAMS, FROM PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF FOOD AND CLOTHING TO UNDERWRITING VARIOUS KINDS OF SELF-HELP PROGRAMS. MANY OF THE RESPONSES IMPLICITLY DOUBTED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT PROGRAMS.

23. THE ROLE OF VALUES IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. THE TENOR OF THIS SESSION CAN BEST BE CONVEYED BY THE CLOSING STATEMENT OF THE SESSION'S RAPPORTEUR, A RETIRED WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT FOR A NEWSPAPER CHAIN: "PEOPLE SEEMED TO BE SAYING, 'WE KNOW WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE, BUT DOES THE GOVERNMENT KNOW?'"

24. MANY EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT AMERICAN POLICY IS BIASED IN FAVOR OF SUPPORTING THE STATUS QUO AND IS OVER-GENEROUS IN SUPPLYING ARMS. THERE WAS AMPLE CRITICISM OF "DIRTY TRICKS" ABROAD AND INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

25. THE YEARNING THAT POLICY-MAKERS ADHERE TO TRADITIONAL AMERICAN IDEALS, PERCEPTIBLE IN ALL OF THE SESSIONS, WAS PARTICULARLY EVIDENT HERE. THE BURDEN WAS PLACED ON THE POLICY-MAKER TO DEMONSTRATE THAT POLICY DECISIONS ARE

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BASED ON MORE THAN CALCULATIONS OF IMMEDIATE BENEFIT. THE EXPOSITION OF WHAT CONSTITUTES THE BASIC VALUES THAT SHOULD GOVERN FOREIGN POLICY WAS OFTEN FAR FROM COHERENT, BUT THE CONCERN WAS DEEPLY FELT AND FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED.

26. GIVEN THE RATHER ABSTRACT NATURE OF THE DISCUSSION OF VALUES WITHIN THE SESSION, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE RESPONSES OF POLLED PORTLANDERS TO A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REGARDING THEIR APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF CERTAIN COURSES OF ACTION:

27. EVEN THOUGH A SOLID MAJORITY OF PORTLANDERS VIEWED THE SPREAD OF COMMUNIST AND OTHER DICTATORIAL REGIMES WITH DISFAVOR, CLEAR-CUT MAJORITIES DISAPPROVED OF COVERT ACTIVITIES BY THIS GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO OVERTHROW SUCH GOVERNMENTS. THIS PREFERENCE FOR NON-INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER NATIONS WAS NOT AN EXPRESSION OF ISOLATIONIST SENTIMENT; ALMOST TWO-THIRDS OF THOSE POLLED RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN WORLD AFFAIRS IN WAYS THAT INDICATED A PREFERENCE FOR ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN EFFORTS TO BETTER WORLD CONDITIONS.

28. THE POLL ALSO SHOWED THAT THE PORTLAND PUBLIC DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN COVERT INTERVENTION ON OUR PART AND SELF-PROTECTIVE GATHERING OF INTELLIGENCE. THUS, DISAPPROVAL OF COVERT ACTIVITIES RANGED FROM 69 PERCENT OPPOSING "SECRET HELP TO A GROUP THAT WAS TRYING TO OVERTHROW A GOVERNMENT UNFRIENDLY TO THE U.S." DOWN TO 58 PERCENT OPPOSING "SECRET HELP TO A GROUP THAT IS FIGHTING AGAINST ANOTHER GROUP BACKED BY COMMUNIST COUNTRIES." BUT, APPROVAL OF SPYING RANGED FROM 80 PERCENT FAVORING IT IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES TO 58 PERCENT FAVORING IT IN COUNTRIES FRIENDLY TO THE UNITED STATES.

29. IN ESSENCE, THE GENERAL PUBLIC SEEMED TO IMPLY WHAT THE SESSION PARTICIPANTS SAID EXPLICITLY: THAT DIFFICULT AS IT MAY BE TO FUSE IMMEDIATE, PRAGMATIC MEANS WITH LONG-RANGE, IDEALISTIC ENDS, IT WAS PART OF THE POLICY-MAKER'S TASK NOT ONLY TO MAKE THE EFFORT BUT TO MAKE IT IN WAYS PERCEPTIBLE TO THE PUBLIC WHOSE SUPPORT HE SOUGHT.

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30. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES. THE PARTICIPANTS ESPOUSED THREE IMPLICIT OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY: PROTECTING THE SECURITY OF (1) OUR TERRITORY; (2) OUR PEOPLE; (3) OUR VALUES.

31. SELF-INTEREST CAME THROUGH IN EXPRESSED PREFERENCES FOR FREEDOM TO EXPORT WITHOUT GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE COMBINED WITH SOME CALLS FOR IMPORT RESTRICTIONS TO PROTECT AMERICAN PRODUCERS AND PRESERVE AMERICAN JOBS. SOME QUESTIONED WHETHER DOMESTIC ECONOMIC INTERESTS WERE BEING SAFEGUARDED.

32. YET THE PREDOMINANT THEME, AS IN THE OTHER SESSIONS, WAS THE DESIRE TO PERCEIVE THAT THIS COUNTRY WAS IN THE FOREFRONT OF EFFORTS TO PRODUCE A PEACEFUL WORLD ORDER GROUNDED IN LAW AND A SENSE OF JUSTICE. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS CONCERN WAS ARTICULATED EXPLICITLY AND REPEATEDLY DISTINGUISHED THE ENTIRE MEETING. PERHAPS THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE UNSPOILED SPACIOUSNESS OF THE NORTH WEST THAT INDUCES AMERICANS IN THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY TO AIR THEIR IDEALISM UNABASHEDLY.

33. GIVEN THE GENERALITY OF THE DISCUSSION THAT ALSO MARKED THIS SESSION, IT IS INSTRUCTIVE TO NOTE HOW PORTLANDERS ASSIGNED PRIORITY TO A LIST OF FOREIGN-POLICY OBJECTIVES. THEY ARE LISTED IN THE ORDER THEY WERE DEEMED "VERY IMPORTANT" BY THOSE POLLED.

- VERY IMPORTANT RANK

- PROTECTING THE JOBS OF
- AMERICAN WORKERS HERE
- IN THE U.S. 80 PERCENT 1

- KEEPING PEACE IN THE
- WORLD 77 2

- STOPPING WORLD HUNGER 65 3

- STOPPING THE SPREAD OF
- COMMUNISM 62 4

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- RAISING THIS COUNTRY'S
- STANDARD OF LIVING 59 5

- STOPPING THE SPREAD OF
- DICTATORSHIPS 46 6

- HELPING TO RAISE THE STANDARD
- OF LIVING OF UNDERDEVELOPED
- COUNTRIES 33 7

- PERSUADING OTHER COUNTRIES TO
- BE MORE DEMOCRATIC 29 8

- PROTECTING WEAKER COUNTRIES AGAINST

- FOREIGN AGRESSION 27 9
- STOPPING WARS BETWEEN SMALL
- COUNTRIES 26 10

34. SUMMATION. A REPORT OF THIS NATURE IS NECESSARILY
IMPRESSIONISTIC, EVEN WHEN BOLSTERED BY THE STATISTICAL
UNDERPINNING OF A PUBLIC-OPINION POLL. IF WE WERE TO
COMBIND OUR IMPRESSIONS INTO ONE VERY BROAD GENERALIZATION
AS TO WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS HOPED WOULD BE THE BASIS OF
OUR DECISION-MAKING, WE MIGHT SUM IT UP AS: REALISM WITH-
OUT RUTHLESSNESS AND IDEALISM WITHOUT SELF-ABNEGATION.
AND WE WOULD ADD THAT, LISTENING AS CAREFULLY AS WE COULD,
WE HEARD THIS EXPRESSED WITH SINCERITY AND A MINIMUM OF
CYNICISM. END TEXT
ROBINSON

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